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An ESSAY *on the* ORIGIN *and* NATURE *of our* IDEA *of the* SUBLIME. *By the Reverend* GEORGE MILLER, *F. T. C. D and M. R. I. A.*

——— αγαθη (γαρ κατα τον Ησιοδον) ερις ηδε βροτοισι.
Και τω οντι καλος υτος, και αξιονικοτατος ευκλειας αγων τε
και σιφανος, εν ω και το ηττασθαι των προγενεστερων ουκ αδοξον.

LONGINUS.

THE various opinions which have been entertained concerning the origin and nature of our idea of the ſublime afford a ſtrong proof of the difficulty of penetrating into our own minds. We are not only urged to the inquiry by that ſcientific curioſity which prompts us to analyze our modes of thinking, but elegance of taſte conſpires to engage us in a reſearch which has for its object all that is great or elevated, and yet the origin and nature of the ſublime are ſtill ſubjects of controverſy. According to Longinus, the ſublime conſiſts in a proud elevation of mind; according to the ingenious author of the Philoſophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, it conſiſts in terror; Doctor Prieſtly places it in an awful ſtillneſs; and Lord Kaims derives it from the magnitude or elevation of viſible

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objects, and from whatever cauſes an agreeable emotion reſembling thoſe which are excited by great or elevated objects of ſight. Doctor Blair profeſſes himſelf inclined to think that mighty force or power, whether accompanied with terror or not, whether employed in protecting or alarming us, has a better title than any thing that had yet been mentioned to be the fundamental quality of the ſublime, but does not inſiſt upon it as ſufficient to found a general theory. This controverſy about the principle of the ſublime has naturally extended to its application, and we ſee the ſame paſſages applauded for this quality by ſome critics and rejected as deſtitute of it by others. Longinus quote as ſublime the Ode of Sappho, which Lord Kaims, whilſt he admits it to be beautiful, excludes from the claſs of ſublimity. The celebrated deſcription of the creation of light, which has been produced by the great critic of antiquity as an illuſtrious inſtance of the ſublime, has not had a better fate. A French critic has diſputed his judgment, and Lord Kaims thinks that the opinion of the latter may be defended as the more ſolid, though he acknowledges that the mind is affected by it with a momentary emotion of ſublimity. The principles of taſte are indeed fixed in our nature, and whatever correſponds to them muſt pleaſe, though we ſhould not be able to aſſign its proper claſs. However, to diſcriminate thoſe claſſes from each other, whilſt it furniſhes an elegant amuſement, appears to conduce to a refinement of our apprehenſion of their reſpective qualities.

PERHAPS it would not be difficult to account for the variety of ſentiment on this ſubject. Some peculiar bias may poſſibly be diſcovered

diſcovered to have operated on each writer, and have cauſed him to deviate from the opinions of the reſt. The love of ſyſtem appears to have narrowed the view of the philoſophical enquirer. He wiſhed to ſimplify the principle of ſublimity, and perceiving that ſome terrible objects were highly ſublime, he concluded that terror was that principle. The ſame diſpoſition ſeems to have operated, though in a different manner, on Lord Kaims. Anxious to unite in one elegant ſyſtem the principles of taſte and morality, and to diſcover in every part of our nature a new ſource of happineſs, he was led to pronounce that no diſagreeable paſſion could produce the ſublime; and to diſtinguiſh it from beauty, the other ſpecies of agreeableneſs, only by a ſingle circumſtance, that of greatneſs. Doctor Prieſtley, with the cool obſervation of a metaphyſician, conſiders merely the degree of exerciſe which great objects give to our faculties: and Longinus, in the ardour of literary compoſition, attending only to the tranſport which a writer experiences when a noble idea preſents itſelf to his view, has deſcribed the ſublime by ſaying, " that the mind is elevated " by it, and ſo ſenſibly affected as to ſwell in tranſport and " inward pride, as if what is only heard or read were its own " invention." A deſire of reconciling the various ſyſtems of former writers, ſuggeſted to Doctor Blair the conjecture, that power was the fundamental quality, but he himſelf doubted of its ſufficiency. Theſe opinions I propoſe to conſider, and perhaps the reſult may be a ſyſtem which, though leſs ſimple, ſhall have the advantage, to uſe the language of philoſophy, of explaining all the phænomena.

Doctor Blair has obſerved that Longinus has frequently uſed the word ſublime to ſignify any remarkable and diſtinguiſhing excellenc of compoſition. In his celebrated treatiſe, accordingly, we find that he has quoted paſſages of great beauty and ſome of true ſublimity, but it gives us no aſſiſtance in the diſcovery of diſcriminating principles. This inaccuracy appears to have ariſen, as I have already mentioned, from the motive which induced the author to compoſe it. He tells his friend Poſthumius that the treatiſe of a preceding writer was deficient with regard to that which appeared to him the more important part of a treatiſe on the ſubject of any art, the method by which ſkill in that art might be acquired. This deficiency he undertakes to ſupply, and propoſing to give practical precepts of compoſition, he enters into the feelings of a writer. In this view he ſees the mind animated by the conſciouſneſs of vivid conceptions, and not conſidering that conceptions of very different kinds might give the mind occaſion to triumph in the conſciouſneſs of its own powers, he defines the ſublime by its analogy to that flattering ſenſation. But though we cannot learn from Longinus the nature of the ſublime, as diſtinguiſhed from other ſpecies of compoſition, it would not be difficult to illuſtrate it by examples from his writings.

The author of the philoſophical enquiry has not been thus deficient in preciſion. According to him terror is the ruling principle of the ſublime. That terror is in many caſes a conſtituent principle I am not diſpoſed to deny; but I conceive that there is not any claſs of ſublime objects which may not ſuggeſt the emotion of grandeur independently of terror, and that there is

is one claſs whoſe grandeur, in ſome caſes, conſiſts in its abſence. In the noble deſcription of a firm and intrepid mind, which the patriotiſm of Horace has given us, every circumſtance of terror is indeed introduced, but only for the purpoſe of more conſpicuouſly diſplaying unſhaken magnanimity. To ſay that terror is the principle of the ſublimity of this deſcription which exhibits to us a mind unmoved by the menaces of a mob or a tyrant, by the violence of natural cauſes and even by the power of the Divinity, would, in my opinion, be to ſtrain in ſupport of an hypotheſis. Conceive thoſe circumſtances of terror to have their effect, and the capital object in the picture, the moral ſublimity of a great mind, is annihilated. Beſides ſuch inſtances, in which the abſence of terror appears to conſtitute the ſublime, there are others which have no apparent connection with terror, as the view of a ſpacious plain or of the ſtarry heaven; and in many painful and terrible objects, as Doctor Blair has obſerved, there is no ſort of grandeur.

The emotion of terror, which this author conſiders as the ruling principle of the ſublime, is, by Doctor Prieſtley, wholly excluded. "The pure ſublime," according to him, "tends to fix the attention and to keep the mind in a kind of *awful ſtillneſs*, whereas "it is the nature of every ſpecies of the pathetic to throw it "into an *agitation*." In this he appears to me to have committed an error ſimilar to that of the writer whom I have laſt conſidered, by extending to the ſublime in general that diſpoſition of mind with which ſome ſublime objects are contemplated. I do not diſpute the ſublimity which he attributes to Young's deſcription of night, but I think that caſes might be mentioned in

in which the mind has a ſtrong perception of ſublimity, whoſe direct operation is to agitate in a conſiderable degree the affections. In proof of this obſervation I will venture to mention one of his own inſtances of the ſublime. When Ajax (for Doctor Prieſtley has by miſtake attributed the prayer to Diomede) prays that Jupiter would give him day and then deſtroy him, the object preſented to the mind does not ſeem fitted to ſink it into an *awful ſtillneſs*; on the contrary, it is animated by a ſympathetic heroiſm. I will mention another inſtance of moral ſublimity, which may perhaps more fully illuſtrate the obſervation. When Mr. Burke, in the glowing colours of his eloquence, paints to us the *circumnavigation of charity*, when he contraſts the ordinary purſuits of travellers with the conduct of him who deſcended into dungeons *to take the ſcale of human miſery*; I do not think that the effect of this ſublime image of active benevolence is an *awful ſtillneſs*. The better principles of our nature triumph in the view, and we balance our ſorrow for the follies and vices of mankind by our exulting admiration of the philanthropy of a Howard. Doctor Prieſtley has, in confirmation of his opinion, obſerved that " deep and ſlow notes in muſic bear a nearer relation to " the ſublime than ſhrill and quick ſounds." Perhaps the moſt ſublime effect which muſic is capable of producing, is produced by ſlow and ſolemn notes; but I think it cannot be denied that there is much grandeur and elevation in the tumultuary parts of the choruſes of Handel, and ſome of my friends of muſical ſkill, whom I have conſulted, agree that the effect of what is conſidered as ſublime in it is not in almoſt any caſe an *awful ſtillneſs*.

Lord Kaims appears to me to have adopted the true principle of inveſtigation, though, as I have already obſerved, a love of ſyſtem prevented him from tracing all its conſequences. He defines figurative ſublimity by the reſemblance of the emotion which it excites, to that which is cauſed by the grandeur or elevation of viſible objects. In this he appears to have followed nature, for he is ſupported by the analogy of language; and had he conſidered the different emotions which great and elevated viſible objects occaſion in different circumſtances, this eſſay ſhould not have been written; but he has attended only to the chearful emotion of ſublimity. A huge impending rock Lord Kaims muſt have admitted to be poſſeſſed both of grandeur and elevation, and yet I apprehend that the view of ſuch an object derives much of its effect from its influence in ſinking the mind of the ſpectator. A gothic church is mentioned by him as an inſtance of the ſublime amongſt the works of art, and ſurely the gloomy depreſſion which is occaſioned by its *darkneſs viſible* is not a diminution of its grandeur. Had Lord Kaims conſidered this difference amongſt the emotions which ſublime viſible objects excite, he would not I think have given up to Huet the judgment of Longinus. The mind does indeed "ſink down "into humility and veneration for a being ſo far exalted above "groveling mortals," but the ſublime object preſented in this magnificent deſcription of creation is not the human mind. The all-powerful Creator is the object, and the mind of a Newton cannot contemplate him without humiliation.

It remains that I ſhould make ſome remarks on the conjecture of Doctor Blair. He tells us that after the review which he

he had taken, there did not occur to him any ſublime object, into the idea of which power, ſtrength and force either enter not directly or are not at leaſt intimately aſſociated with the idea, by leading our thoughts to ſome aſtoniſhing power, as concerned in the production of the object. The reflecting mind of Doctor Blair may be led by the conſideration of each of the objects which he has mentioned to the contemplation of power, but I apprehend that in ſome of thoſe caſes the ſublimity of the object may be perceived without any ſuch reflection. The view of an extended plain may expand with admiration the mind of him who does not think of the power that formed it; and endleſs numbers, which Doctor Blair conſiders as filling the mind with great ideas, do not neceſſarily lead us to a metaphyſical view of the powers of the underſtanding by which the modes of number are combined. With regard to the moral or ſentimental ſublime, Doctor Blair would ſay, that we are affected by the *energy* of character which we obſerve in our fellow-creatures; but I am inclined to think that the ordinary conſideration of ſuch examples of mental ſuperiority reaches no farther than a moral approbation of what is eſteemed worthy of the dignity of our nature.

Such are the accounts which have hitherto been given of the origin and nature of the ſublime. That of Longinus gives us no aſſiſtance, but each of the others, though imperfect, appears to be founded in nature. I agree ſo far with the author of the philoſophical enquiry as to think that in ſome caſes terror may heighten our perception of ſublimity. I ſo far agree with Doctor Prieſtley

Prieſtley as to admit that in ſome caſes the effect of the ſublime is to keep the mind in a kind of *awful ſtillneſs*, and that extreme agitation is inconſiſtent with it. With Lord Kaims, I think that the true method of inveſtigating its principle is to trace the analogy between the effects of viſible and mental objects; and with Doctor Blair, I am of opinion that mighty force or power is frequently a cauſe of the ſublime, though in ſome caſes the conſideration of it appears to be rather a philoſophical inference than a part of the ſenſation. If it be true that theſe ſeveral ſyſtems have a foundation in nature, and the examples adduced by their reſpective authors appear ſufficiently to warrant the opinion, a conſiſtent ſcheme which ſhould reconcile them with each other would have ſome pretenſion to be conſidered as giving a true account of the ſublime.

I HAVE already obſerved that Lord Kaims appears to have adopted the true method of inveſtigating the principle of the ſublime. In every language the name of that emotion, by whatſoever object it may have been excited, has been derived from the magnitude or elevation of viſible objects. His view of viſible ſublimity appears however to have been confined. He deſcribes the emotion excited by it as extremely pleaſant, though diſtinguiſhed from that occaſioned by beauty in being rather ſerious than gay, and conſiders the qualities that contribute to beauty as eſſential to it. It is, according to his idea, beauty on a larger ſcale. From this idea he has however departed in the example of figurative ſublimity, which he has taken from Oſſian. In the con-

flict of Lochlin and Innisfail, in *the troubled ocean* and *the thundering heaven*, to whose noise that of the battle is compared, we shall in vain look for order, regularity or proportion. There is much sublimity in the description, but no beauty. Let us consider great or elevated visible objects as exciting different emotions, as raising or depressing the mind; let us combine the stormy grandeur of the sky and ocean with the regular magnificence which in framing his system Lord Kaims appears to have exclusively considered, and I imagine that we shall have a basis sufficiently broad for the structure of figurative sublimity.

THERE appear to me to be three classes of sublime objects—external sensible objects, those that excite the emotion which Doctor Blair has called the moral or sentimental sublime, and superior beings. I have called the first class that of external sensible rather than that of visible objects, that I might include within it the sublime of sound. "The burst of thunder or of cannon, "the roaring of winds, the shouting of multitudes, the sound of "vast cataracts of water," are all, as Doctor Blair has observed, "incontestibly grand objects;" and they appear to me to excite emotions similar to those with which we are affected by the magnitude or elevation of objects of sight. The latter have been already in some measure considered. It has I think appeared that the emotions excited by them are not all of the same kind. The starry firmament, and the tempestuous sky illuminated only by the blaze of lightning, are both sublime, but surely the emotions with which they are beheld are different. The pious admiration

admiration of the Great Author of the Univerſe with which the view of the former inſpires us, is not the diſpoſition with which we behold the *thought-executing fires* of the latter. In the awful ſublime of nature terror then may have place; but that terror, if very great, will be deſtructive of the ſublime, by withdrawing our attention from the object. An example will beſt illuſtrate this variety of our emotions. The unbounded view of a calm ſea will fill the mind with the pleaſing emotion of the ſublime. If the ſea be agitated by a violent ſtorm, whilſt the ſpectator is ſecurely placed on a promontory, the emotion of ſublimity will, I think, be increaſed by the idea of irreſiſtible force which its agitation will ſuggeſt; but as that force is exhibited to us in circumſtances of danger to thoſe who ſhould be expoſed to it, the emotion will now become of the more awful kind. If the ſpectator behold a ſhip in thoſe circumſtances of danger, his terror will become much more lively, but his ſympathy with the unfortunate ſufferers will no longer permit him to contemplate the wild magnificence of the ocean. If he is himſelf in danger, his attention is ſtill more effectually withdrawn from it and directed to one ſingle object, the means of eſcaping. It appears then that the ſublime of nature may be heightened by terror, ſo far as that terror does not prevent us from attending to the whole of the great object which inſpires it. This does not confine within ſuch narrow limits the ſublime of deſcription as that of nature. The affections are principles deſigned for action, and mere deſcription will not ſo eaſily excite them to a degree inconſiſtent with that ſelf-poſſeſſion which is requiſite to the per-

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ception of the ſublime. As the emotions excited by the ſublimity of viſible objects are of different kinds, the qualities which excite them muſt be different. Greatneſs or elevation are the general characteriſtics, which, to produce emotions of the chearful kind, muſt be accompanied by ſome degree of thoſe qualities which conſtitute beauty, as regularity, proportion, order and colour. To excite ſenſations of awful apprehenſion muſt be attended by circumſtances which indicate mighty power, or which tend to alarm the mind, as darkneſs, ſolitude and ſilence. The regularity which is required in the former caſe muſt however not be very exact. " In things which are ſtrictly regular," Doctor Blair has obſerved, " we feel ourſelves confined, and there is no room " for the mind's exerting any great effort."

To this claſs of ſublime objects I muſt annex the ideas of number and duration, though not objects of ſenſe. They evidently excite emotions ſimilar to that produced by the contemplation of wide-extended ſpace. Belonging to all kinds of beings, and yet containing in them nothing of intelligence, they appear to be moſt properly claſſed with the inanimate objects of nature. Perhaps the whole might be included in the general deſcription of inanimate or unintelligent ſublime objects.

THE ſecond claſs has been defined by Doctor Blair, as " ariſing " from certain exertions of the human mind, from certain af- " fections and actions of our fellow-creatures." " Theſe," he has obſerved, " produce an effect extremely ſimilar to what is pro-

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" duced by the view of grand objects in nature, filling the mind " with admiration and elevating it above itself." From this class terror appears to me to be excluded. The affections and actions which it comprizes are not those of a mind alarmed by apprehension, nor are they fitted to excite sentiments of fear. An heroic disregard of danger, a cool and firm presence of mind in difficult and embarrassing circumstances, a disinterested and expanded benevolence, with a strong sense of every generous feeling, and a principle of virtue superior to the opinions of weak and corrupt men, and to the inordinate propensities of our nature, are the moral qualities which form the sublime of human character. To these perhaps should be added those qualities which are considered as belonging to the imagination or understanding. Shakespeare's description of poetic fancy will, I think, justify its admission, and the character of sublimity will scarcely be denied to the intellectual powers of Newton. When I say that terror is excluded from this class, I would be understood to speak only with reference to a manly mind. Habitual servility may possibly efface the recollection of the common nature of the species, and cause a man to look up to his fellow-man with sentiments of awful submission; but he who possesses a manly mind will separate the consideration of the individual from that of his station, and whilst he will shew for the latter that deference which the well-being of society requires, he will feel for the former no other sentiments of respect than those which are due to qualities which exalt and adorn the character of man. Sublime objects of this class inspire us with more elevated emotions

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than thoſe of inanimate nature. In the Ode of Horace, to which I have already alluded, we ſee every circumſtance of political and natural terror, and even the wrath of ſuch a Deity as Paganiſm could form, introduced merely as ſubordinate to the diſplay of the firm intrepidity of the juſt man. We are not ſo much affected by the great image of a broken world as by that of him who receives the ſhock undaunted.

THE laſt and higheſt claſs of ſublime objects comprehends ſuperior beings, and more eſpecially the Supreme Being. This, like the firſt, includes objects which excite emotions of different kinds. Superior beings may excite in us emotions of ſublimity, either by circumſtances of terror, or by a diſplay of unwearied goodneſs employed in the protection of mortal weakneſs. As an example of the ſublime of this kind, diveſted of all terror, I will refer to the morning hymn of our firſt anceſtors, in which with *holy rapture* they addreſs the *Parent of Good*, and call on all nature to join in his praiſe. Doctor Blair has quoted from the Prophet Habakkuk a deſcription of the appearance of God, heightened by every circumſtance of terror: " He ſtood and meaſured the " earth; he beheld and drove aſunder the nations; the everlaſt- " ing mountains were ſcattered; the perpetual hills did bow; " his ways are everlaſting. The mountains ſaw thee and they " trembled; the overflowing of the water paſſed by; the deep " uttered his voice and lifted up his hands on high." The ſame qualities, which have been already mentioned in treating of the other claſſes, muſt furniſh us with our beſt conceptions of ſuperior beings.

beings. They can be exhibited to us only by a diſplay of moral and intellectual perfection, or by the gracious or terrible effects of their power.

I HAVE now conſidered the different ſyſtems which have been propoſed with regard to the emotion excited by ſublime objects, and having pointed out in what reſpect each was imperfect, have followed to its whole extent the method propoſed by Lord Kaims, and have, I hope, ſupplied the deficiency of thoſe ſyſtems. The general error appears to me to have been a ſuppoſition of a ſimplicity in the emotion. The emotion is indeed always of a grave kind, but with ſome variation. I have endeavoured to ſhew that, though the ſublime of human character excites only an admiration for the great or good qualities of our nature, yet the ſublimity of viſible objects, as well as that of ſuperior beings, may be perceived ſometimes with an awful apprehenſion occaſioned by circumſtances of terror, ſometimes with a chearful expanſion of the mind filled by the union of beauty and greatneſs. If this reaſoning be admitted, it will enable us to determine in what reſpects the pathetic is connected with the ſublime, and to form a judgment concerning the nature of the merit of thoſe admired paſſages whoſe pretenſions to the claſs of ſublimity have been diſputed.

WITH regard to the connection of the pathethic and the ſublime, two different inquiries may be propoſed; the one of which is, whether the effects produced by them are of the ſame kind; the

the other, whether a repreſentation of paſſion can form a ſublime object.

In anſwer to the former I would obſerve, that the ſublime operates directly on the affections, and therefore muſt be conſidered as producing effects of the ſame kind with thoſe which are produced by the pathetic. Admiration and terror are the effects of the ſublime. Doctor Prieſtley does indeed profeſs to exclude from them every kind of *agitation*; but I ſuppoſe this term not to be uſed in its ſtricteſt application, for he has derived the ſublimity which he attributes to the ideas of wealth, honour and power from thoſe circumſtances which enable them to fill and *charm* the ſoul. It has indeed been cuſtomary to ſpeak of the emotion of ſublimity, and Lord Kaims has diſtinguiſhed emotion from paſſion: "An internal emotion or agitation of the "mind," he ſays, "when it paſſeth away without deſire, is deno-"minated an emotion; when deſire follows, the motion or agi-"tation is denominated a paſſion." This diſtinction may be of importance to a moraliſt, but cannot be of any in the preſent enquiry. Emotion and paſſion, according to the examples by which Lord Kaims illuſtrates his diſtinction, differ only in degree, and the preſent queſtion is about the kind and not about the degree of the impreſſion made by a ſublime object; but this diſtinction may be admitted, and yet the ſublime and the pathetic be conſidered as producing effects of the ſame kind. The emotion excited by the ſublime of eloquence is frequently of an active kind. The celebrated oath of Demoſthenes, by which he deified thoſe ancient patriots who had fallen in the plain of

Marathon

Marathon probably contributed not a little to his acquittal. We may, I think, venture to ſay that this image of heroic fortitude had no ſmall ſhare in cauſing that decree by which the Athenians refuſed to condemn the friend of Grecian liberty for the unfortunate iſſue of his counſels. The emotion of ſublimity muſt then be allowed ſometimes to be attended by deſire operating on the will, and there cannot be any reaſon for conſidering that emotion in any caſe as entirely diſtinct from the effect of the pathetic, which will not equally affect what is acknowledged to belong to the latter. The emotion produced by the pathos of dramatic diſtreſs is not often ſo ſtrong as to inſpire an active wiſh of relieving the unfortunate hero or heroine; and all agree in ſaying, that tragedies repreſenting thoſe ſufferings with which we ſo inactively ſympathize are yet pathetic. The emotions then both of the ſublime and the pathetic are ſometimes of an active and ſometimes of an inactive kind: There can be no reaſon for diſtinguiſhing them from each other in this reſpect; and if the ſublime be conſidered as deeply intereſting us, and therefore in a greater or leſs degree agitating the mind, it cannot be improper to regard it as a part of that general claſs which includes all the cauſes of agitation. The diviſion of the claſſes of ſublime objects will enable us to determine which are the emotions attendant on the perception of ſublimity. The deſcription or conception of ſuperior beings may, as in the examples already given, be attended by reverential love and gratitude, or by terror. The ſublime of human character produces emotions of love and reſpect by a diſplay of all the nobler qualities of our nature;

and admiration or terror is the impreſſion made by natural ſublimity.

THE other queſtion concerning the repreſentation of paſſion we ſhall alſo be enabled to determine by the principles already ſtated. The claſs of moral ſublimity has been deſcribed as comprehending whatever is conſidered as ennobling the human character, the ſuperior energy of intellectual or moral qualities. The agitation of paſſion may indeed give occaſion to the exertion of that mental vigour which ſtruggles to ſubdue it, or to the diſplay of that elevation of mind to which it ſuggeſts ſplendid and glowing images of great objects, but it does not appear that the tumult of paſſion is itſelf the object of our admiration. Doctor Stack, in an eſſay publiſhed in the Tranſactions of the Academy, has obſerved, that ſome of thoſe paſſages which exhibit the agitations of the reſolute character of Othello may be called ſublime, and I agree with him in the obſervation, whilſt I differ from him in the principle; they are ſublime, not becauſe they are paſſionate, but becauſe they evince the habitual heroiſm of Othello. When he wiſhes to brave the utmoſt violence of ſtorms, *if after every tempeſt come ſuch calms*, the ſublimity of his character does not conſiſt in the warmth of his love, which might be felt as much by a feebler nature, but in the magnanimity, which proves his attachment by the dangers for which he would conſider ſuch a meeting as an adequate reward. In the ſame manner, his *farewell* to thoſe great objects which had once employed his thoughts is indeed ſublime, becauſe it exhibits to us a great mind, even when ſinking under the attacks of paſſion,

paſſion, ſtill recurring to the magnificent circumſtances of its former purſuits. In the ſpeech in which he deliberates about the admiſſion of Emilia, there is much paſſion, and yet little ſublimity. The perplexed agitation of his mind, in the former part, gives me no ſenſation which deſerves that name; but, in the latter part, the greatneſs of his mind makes him think that all nature ſhould ſympathize with the horror of the ſcene. It appears then, I think, that the grandeur of thoſe paſſages conſiſts in the general elevation of Othello's mind, and not in the violence of the paſſion under which he is repreſented as labouring. The emotions of love and jealouſy are not more ſtrongly drawn by Shakeſpeare than by Sappho, but in the character of Othello they are repreſented as operating on a generous and heroic mind; and though we deny the praiſe of ſublimity to unreſiſting weakneſs, however violently agitated, we view with admiration the ſtruggles of magnanimity. That it is not the paſſion, but the magnanimity which ſtruggles againſt it, that gives us the idea of ſublimity, may perhaps receive a further confirmation, if we conſider the ſoliloquy of Othello when he is preparing for the murder of his wife. The generoſity of his mind had been ſubdued, and he no longer endeavours to repreſs the attacks of paſſion: love and jealouſy have entire dominion over him; and, as Lord Kaims has obſerved, every thing is done to reconcile the two oppoſite paſſions; he is reſolved to put her to death, but he will not ſhed her blood, nor ſo much as ruffle her ſkin. Nothing can be more natural or more pathetic, but ſurely this is not ſublime. The concluſions which I would infer from theſe obſervations are, that where the cha-

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racter is too feeble to make any ſtruggle, as in the Ode of Sappho, or where the ſtruggle of a generous mind has ceaſed, and the conflict of paſſion alone remains, as in the ſoliloquy of Othello, the expreſſion of the paſſions does not produce the emotion of the ſublime, and that it only contributes indirectly to this effect by exciting a diſplay of mental vigour.

Lord Kaims, conformably to his notion of the ſublime, has obſerved that no diſagreeable paſſion can produce it, and has propoſed the ſoliloquy of Antony wailing over the body of Cæſar, as a teſt by which it ſhould be determined with regard to the paſſion of revenge. Doctor Stack, on the other hand, has declared that he eſteems moſt parts of this paſſage truly ſublime. In this, as in the inſtances already mentioned, I agree with Doctor Stack in opinion, that the paſſage is ſublime, but its ſublimity conſiſts in diſplaying the generous elevation of the mind of Antony. It may perhaps be thought that elevation of mind is without reaſon aſcribed to him whoſe thirſt of power induced him artfully to ſtimulate the people againſt the conſpirators, and afterwards to ſacrifice his uncle to the reſentment of Octavius, whoſe cruel vengeance prompted him to exult over the bloody head and hands of Cicero, and whoſe ſenſuality *beguiled him to the very heart of loſs*; but the character of Antony was not uniform. Brave and generous by nature, but corrupted by his early education, *his faults in him ſeemed as the ſpots of heaven, more fiery by night's blackneſs.* When his paſſions, which habitual indulgence had rendered ungovernable, did not *o'er his ſpirit* exert their *full ſupremacy*, he was noble and humane. The pure patriotiſm of Brutus received from him its deſerved eulogium, and

and his generoſity overpowered the mind of Enobarbus, who had deſerted him in his laſt diſtreſs. *His taints and honours waged equal with him.* Such is the character of Antony, as Shakeſpeare has taken it from the impartial account of Plutarch, and not from the exaſperated eloquence of Cicero. In this ſoliloquy he pours forth the genuine ſentiments of his heart. His affectionate attachment to Cæſar ſuggeſts to him an animated and ſtrong conception of the calamities which ſhould overwhelm his country; of that *domeſtic fury and fierce civil ſtrife* which ſhould *cumber all the parts of Italy.* In the latter part of the ſpeech there is indeed preſented to us a direct picture of revenge. It muſt however be obſerved that *Cæſar's ſpirit, with Ate by his ſide, come hot from hell,* does not exhibit to us human paſſions. Thus repreſented we regard him as a ſuperior being; and though the vengeance of a mortal could not give us an elevated idea of his character, we may bow with reverential awe before the terrors of a deſtroying Angel. At the ſame time I will alſo admit, with Doctor Stack, that amongſt thoſe *with whom revenge is virtue,* it is a direct object of ſublime conception. Junius tells us that an inſult *lowers the mind in its own opinion, and forces it to recover its level by revenge.* To thoſe who think with the acrimony of that elegant writer, the ſpirit of vengeance is an exaltation of the human character, and therefore, without any variation in the principle, muſt, to their vitiated minds, give impreſſions of moral ſublimity.

This eſſay, on the Origin and Nature of our Idea of the Sublime, has been reduced, as nearly as poſſible, to the ſtrictneſs of philoſophical reaſoning. The opinions of different writers have been

been examined, and their inſufficiency pointed out by examples, which may be conſidered as what philoſophers call *experimenta crucis*; experiments of that deciſive kind whoſe reſult not only correſponds to the cauſe aſſigned, but proves that ſome other cauſe before aſſigned is not adequate to the explication of the effect. Each of theſe opinions however, though ſingly inſufficient, appears, from the inſtances alleged by its author, to have been founded in nature, and therefore, by a kind of *induction*, they have been collected into one ſyſtem, which has, in the laſt place, been applied to the ſolution of more doubtful *phænomena* of taſte. Scientific demonſtration cannot be applied, but advantage may ariſe from the regularity of ſcientific method.